GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:7592
ANSWERED ON:15.05.2000
POLICY FOR FOREST DEPENDENT COMMUNITIES
AMBATI BRAHMANAIAH

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government have received representations to evolve a policy for forest-dependent people and communities;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the manner in which the Government are going to work out a policy to ensure that traditional and forest dependent communities are not pushed to a situation where their survival itself becomes difficult because of denial of access to forests; and

(d) the steps proposed by the Government to interact with such communities and evolve a policy?.

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS

(SHRI BABULAL MARANDI)

(a)to(c) The Government have not received any representation to evolve a policy for forest-dependent people and communities. However, the Government have enunciated the new National Forest Policy in 1988 with the principal aim to ensure environmental stability and maintenance of ecological balance by creating a massive people`s movement with the involvement of women. The Government have no proposal to change the present policy. For the forest-dependent people, policy envisages that:

(i) Minior forest produce provides sustenance to tribal population and to the other communities residing in and around the forests. Such produce should be protected, improved and their production enhanced with due regard to generation of employment and income.

(ii) The programme of afforestation should be intensified with special emphasis on augmenting fuelwood production to meet the requirement of the rural people.

(iii) The holders of customary rights and concessions in forest areas should be motivated to identify themselves with the protection and development of forests from which they derive benefits. The rights and concessions from forests should primarily be for the bonafide use of the communities living within and around forest areas, specially the tribals.

(iv) The life of tribals and other poor living within and near forests revolves around forests. The rights and concessions enjoyed by them should be fully protected. Their domestic requirements of fuelwood, fodder, minor forest produce and construction timber should be the first charge on forest produce. These and substitute materials should be made available through conveniently located depots at reasonable prices.

(v) Similar consideration should be given to scheduled castes and other poor living near forests. However, the area, which such consideration should cover would be determined by the carrying capacity of the forests.

(vi) Having regard to the symbiotic relationship between the tribal people and forests, a primary task of all agencies responsible for forest management, including the forest development corporations should be to associate the tribal people closely in the protection, regeneration and development of forests as well as to provide gainful employment to people living in and around the forests.

(d) The involvement of forest-dependent people in protection and development of forests on usufruct sharing basis has become the main strategy of management of forests. Such people constitute village forest protection committees (VFPC) for joint management of forests. At present 36130 village forest protection committees are managing around 10.25 million hectare of degraded forests. In the joint forest management, the VFPCs are involved from the stage of planning. These committees have rehabilitated forests as permanent resource base for their sustenance.